

ADVOCATE **DRUM**



Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization

OCTOBER 2022

Army Facing Recruiting Challenges

Joe Butler Jr. - Civilian Aide to Secretary of the Army



The US Army recruiting goal to have 60,000 active duty enlistments this year will fall short by approximately 12,000 to 15,000 according to Christine Wormuth, Secretary of the Army. The Army has faced a challenging environment not seen since the All-Volunteer Force was established in 1973. Driving factors include the impact of COVID 19, more intense competition with the private sector and a declining number of young Americans interested in serving their nation. In May, the Army chief of staff, Gen. James McConville testified before Congress that only 23% of Americans ages 17-24 are qualified to serve without waivers to join, down from 29% in recent years. Obesity and health issues also impact the number of those eligible to serve. The Army is conducting a more thorough investigation of one's health history

when visiting a MEPS (Military Entrance Processing Station), and while this may produce a more qualified candidate, it also eliminates many candidates who would have qualified previously. Some recruiters believe the disqualification of a candidate on certain grounds pertaining to their health record goes a bit overboard, and may eliminate candidates who have the potential of being solid soldiers.

Local recruiters are facing the same challenges and admit they will have to work harder than ever to meet their goals. The Watertown recruiting station will meet approximately 75% of its annual goal which concludes in mid-September. The Army understands these challenges will not go away and the coming years will be just as challenging. In response, the Army has implemented a number of initiatives to overcome recruiting and retention challenges. These include funding for targeted enlistment bonuses (up to 50k), to include incentives for critical Military Occupational Skill (MOS) career fields; quick ship bonuses (35K) for recruits willing to ship within 45 days; expanding Station of Choice for new recruits to provide additional opportunities to serve across the nation; and a revised tattoo policy more in line with other military services enabling more of our youth population to serve.

One idea being circulating locally to improve recruiting and bridge the knowledge gap is to have a day where high school students throughout the North Country spend an entire day at Fort Drum. Students would be interacting with soldiers and participating in a number of activities to better understand what a soldier looks like and what a soldier does in the Army. I believe this type of exposure will allow our youth to better understand the Army, its values, mission and how rewarding a career may be in uniform. It also will serve to clear any misconceptions young students may have. This type of exposure will educate our students about the Army, whether they decide to join or not, and that is a good thing. "Army Day" has had great success in other areas of the Nation and hopefully can be implemented here at the 10th Mountain Division with equal success.

We are proud to be home to the 10th Mountain Division and we can all help. Whether it is telling the Army story, opening our doors to recruiters, or breaking down barriers that impede recruiting, we can make a difference. We need to make sure our young men and women understand what the Army is all about, whether it might be a good fit, and how important it is to maintain an All-Volunteer Force in order to protect our nation and preserve the democracy we hold so dear.

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**Chair's Comments**

By: David Zembiec

So far, 2022 has seen much in the way of Fort Drum related activity. The war in Afghanistan has ended, our Soldiers have returned. History has shown us that the 10th Mountain Division continues to deploy in support of our nation. On September 9th, we said "Goodbye" to LTG

Milford Beagle and welcomed Major General Gregory Anderson back to the North Country as the new Commanding General of the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum.

With financial support from National Grid, the speaker series entitled Interviews & Insights kicked off in January 2021 and has continued through this year. This interview series offers our members and community information on all things Army and Fort Drum, with a personal touch. Interviews included individuals in various positions within the Army. If you missed one, you can still find them by visiting www.advocatedrum.org

We continue to advocate on behalf of Fort Drum with our elected officials on projects that are important. We were pleased to see that the Railhead and Wellfield Expansion Resilience Project were approved in 2021. Fort Drum hosted a groundbreaking event for the new Railhead this past July, noting how the facility will contribute significantly to deployment readiness. Most recently, Advocate Drum collected and submitted over 200 letters in support of stationing a Multi-Domain Task Force at Fort Drum, which could mean the stationing of an additional 3,000 soldiers and civilian support personnel. Letters were provided by businesses, community organizations, and local, state, and federal officials.

The officers of Advocate Drum continue to maintain regular contact with the offices of both Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, and Congresswoman Stefanik. We rely on our representatives and their staff for their insights and guidance on how we can best support their advocacy on behalf of Fort Drum. We are also grateful for our strong working relationship with Fort Drum's leadership which is key to remaining in tune with the needs of the installation and our military families, and the issues that can affect the installation's future

Our committees continue to be active and engaged in facilitating spousal employment opportunities, supporting efforts to address child care needs in the region, monitoring housing needs within the community, broadband challenges in the region, and documenting the regional economic impact of Fort Drum. The success of these efforts all rely on numerous volunteers and the expertise of partner agencies across the region who all share a commitment to protecting Fort Drum and its contributions to our economy and quality of life. Ultimately, it is the funding we receive from our local governments and your memberships that allows us to continue our mission to protect and enhance Fort Drum. A special thanks to each of you for your support and to the many volunteers who donated their time and assistance to our organization during 2022.

Military Spouse Economic Empowerment Zone



Advocate Drum has made strides to maintain the workforce talent we have with military spouses and transitioning Soldiers and to keep them in our communities by improving connections with local employers. The Military Spouse Professional Network (MSPN) has also reached

out to connect with employers and transitioning Soldiers through the national Hiring our Heroes. Program. Workshops have been conducted in conjunction with local chambers of commerce and economic development agencies, and a resource guide was created. Advocate Drum was successful working with State officials to streamline the process for military spouses to obtain professional licenses when coming into New York State, and in obtaining approval from the New York State Board of Regents for the Transitional J Certificate which allows teachers to work right away while continuing to work on getting their permanent certification.

Most recently, Advocate Drum is sponsoring the designation of a Fort Drum region Military Spouse Economic Empowerment Zone (MEEZ)—another Hiring Our Heroes program. MSEEZs are collaborative efforts among the local business, civic, and military communities that establish employment networks to facilitate the hiring of military spouses. They work to establish local tools and resources to help tackle military spouse employment issues head-on. In order to form an MSEEZ, the community must have an active Military Spouse Professional Network. There are currently twenty-two MSEEZ working groups across the U.S.

The Fort Drum region MSEEZ supported by Advocate Drum encompasses the tri-county region, with representation from government, industry, nonprofit organizations, and military spouses. The plan is to launch the program in February 2023.



Welcome



Welcome to the new Commanding General of Fort Drum and the 10th Mountain Division, MG Gregory Anderson. We look forward to working with MG Anderson.

MG Anderson previously served as a deputy commander of the 10th Mountain Division. He also had an earlier stint at Fort Drum when he commanded 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, from February 2010 to May 2012. Following that, he served as commander of 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington. His last assignment before division command was director of J-3 Operations/Cyber, U.S. Africa Command, in Germany.

We bid farewell and congratulations to LTG Milford Beagle, Jr. as he left in September for his new position at the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.



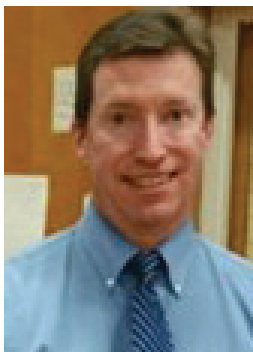
Congratulations to our Men of the Mountain

Four new members were inducted as Fort Drum's Man of the Mountain or Woman of the Mountain.

This is an honor bestowed upon civilians who have contributed significantly to the quality of life of Fort Drum Soldiers and families.

Stephen Todd

Jefferson-Lewis BOCES superintendent and an officer on the Advocate Drum Board, has been a steadfast partner and advocate for Fort Drum families and children in the local school districts. With a "Lead by Example" philosophy, he has demonstrated a commitment to supporting military children.



"The people who are being honored here today, I consider heroes, and I would consider myself a humble servant who has been very lucky," Todd said. "I have worked in school systems that have had the rare joy of being able to interact with a military installation with wonderful people."

Todd said that many of his colleagues in the state and around the nation find it hard to understand how the civilian-military relationship works.

"They don't understand the model that we have been able to enjoy here of school and military installation working together seamlessly in service of children and in service of the community," he said. "It makes all of us better."

Joseph Butler Jr.

A lifelong resident of Watertown, served as its mayor for four years before being appointed as civilian aide to the secretary of the Army (CASA) for New York (North) in 2019. Joe is also a Director on the Advocate Drum Board. His dedication to Fort Drum Soldiers, family members, retirees and civilian employees was first evident when he served as a member of the Watertown City Council for eight years, and his support and advocacy have grown ever since.



"Being a civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army is truly a great privilege and honor," Butler said. "And it is a great privilege and honor because of the institution I represent, and because I have a front row seat to the greatest division in the U.S. Army."

As CASA, Butler said he interacts frequently with talented Soldiers and civilians at Fort Drum who represent the best values in America. He said that many deserving individuals have been named Man or Woman of the Mountain, and he is grateful to be among them.

"I may not be as worthy as many who have come before me, but I am as grateful as any and I am as thankful as any," he said. "This is something I will always cherish."

James Corriveau

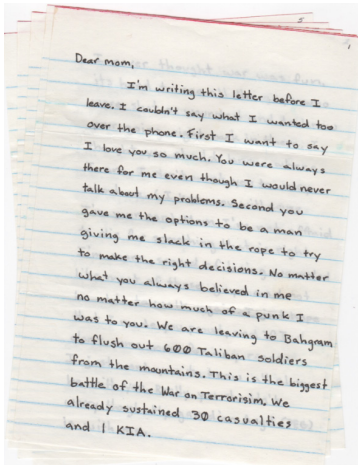
Served as director of Fort Drum Directorate of Public Works from 2006 until 2015, but his 41-year tenure on the installation began in 1974 as a lieutenant and engineer who arrived at Camp Drum with his wife and son. Corriveau transitioned to a civil service career at Fort Drum, where he was instrumental in assisting with the \$1.4 billion infrastructure expansion on post. He also served as chief of housing for several years and helped to implement the U.S. Army's Residential Communities Initiative (RCI) at Fort Drum that privatized family housing.



"It was just a phenomenal time, and whatever success I can take credit for was really enabled by the crackerjack team I had around me," Corriveau said. "I was surrounded by excellence the whole while. Part of the joy in that, for me, was not just the sticks and bricks of building things but knowing that what we did underwrote the success of any operation here on Fort Drum."

Corriveau continues to support the Fort Drum community through Advocate Drum, and he founded the local chapter of Guitars for Vets, which provides music therapy program for struggling veterans.

"I owe a thanks to the Army and Fort Drum for providing me with over 41 years - it's been a great run," he said.



Dear Fort Drum Community,

Just like their grandparents before them, who joined the military after the invasion of Pearl Harbor and fought in World War II, countless American women and men enlisted in the armed forces after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. These young warriors—many of whom are part of the 10th Mountain Division community—demonstrated extraordinary courage and honor and, we believe, are this century's "Greatest Generation."

In an effort to ensure that their service and sacrifice are never forgotten, we are encouraging 10th Mountain troops, veterans, and their families to share with us any war-related letters or emails they wrote. Or, if they didn't write any correspondences, we encourage them to write an email or letter now about a particularly memorable experience (and it can be addressed to anyone) and share it with us. Consider it like a diary entry or an oral history—but just in the form of a correspondence.

We understand that correspondences by any troops and their loved ones are often deeply personal and intimate, and writers can leave out their full names if they prefer to. But for those willing to include their full names, we would be grateful if they could also send us a short bio and a photo.

Although we do prefer original letters, we gratefully accept scans and (ideally color) photocopies of letters as well. And with emails, since there is no original, the writers can just forward us what they wrote. In fact, our highest priority now is to preserve emails by those who were in Kabul in the final weeks, days, and hours of the withdrawal, such as members of the Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team and its Sustainment Brigade. And, again, they can write an email now, looking back on their experiences, and send it to us.

People can also help by simply sharing our information and this appeal, both to individuals and to groups who can help us spread the word. The more individuals who learn about our project enables us to save more and more correspondences.

The letters and emails that troops, veterans, and their families have sent in have already been used—with permission from the senders, of course—in multiple ways, including but not limited to being featured in books, documentary, educational curricula, plays, readings, and the "BEHIND THE LINES" podcast hosted by the Emmy-winning (19 times) journalist Barbara Harrison.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and we are especially grateful to Jill Van Hoesen, Doug Schmidt, Meredith Taylor, Keli Schmid, Advocate Drum (the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization), and many others for giving us this opportunity to reach out to the 10th Mountain Division community.

With great appreciation, Celia Straus and Andy Carroll

Celia Straus is a New York Times bestselling author, screen and live event writer, and founding partner of Barbara Harrison Media. She was the creator/writer for the National Memorial Day Concert on the Mall. Her book, *Hidden Battles on Unseen Fronts: Stories of American Soldiers with PTSD, TBI* was a first look at the mental health of Iraq, Afghanistan veterans. She authored her father's memoir, *Pathfinder Pioneer, the Memoir of a Lead Bomber Pilot in WWII*, an Amazon WWII bestseller. She is also the senior producer of the "BEHIND THE LINES" podcast.

Andrew Carroll is an author, historian, public speaker, and the editor of several New York Times bestsellers, including *War Letters* and *Behind the Lines*. Andrew also edited *Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front*, in the *Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families*, and the book inspired the Emmy award-winning documentary "Operation Homecoming." Carroll is the founding director of the Center for American War Letters (www.WarLetters.us); the creator of the entirely virtual Museum of American War Letters; and the co-host, with Barbara Harrison, of the "BEHIND THE LINES" podcast. In his pursuit of war letters and emails, he has traveled to all 50 states and more than 40 countries, including Iraq (2003), Afghanistan (2003 and 2007) and Ukraine (August 2022).

EMAIL CELIA AT CELIA.STRAUS@GMAIL.COM AND ANDREW AT WARLETTERPROJECT@AOL.COM.

STARBASE Academy at Fort Drum

Class was in session for the first time Sept. 12 at the Department of Defense STARBASE Academy at Fort Drum, as more than 40 students from the Watertown School District were immersed in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education.

The students' first assignment – as an icebreaker and a nod to the military – was to choose their own call signs for their STARBASE badges. Some went with career-oriented tags such as "Astronomer" and "Biologist" while others, like "Sour Cream," were somewhat inexplicable.

Joanne Witt, Fort Drum STARBASE Academy director, said this three-minute task to start the day helped settle students and teachers into the new learning environment.

"Even the teachers came up with their own call signs," she said. "This is a completely new experience for all of us, so doing something fun like this gets everyone comfortable."

The focus of STARBASE is on fifth-grade education, with peer-reviewed curriculum designed to improve STEM knowledge, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.



"All of our lessons are aligned with New York state science and math standards, and so we start with the fundamentals, then gradually expand on that knowledge," Witt said. "Students will be learning things like elements of matter, measurements, energy exploration and introduction to engineering design and robotics."

Aside from the various STEM-based learning equipment, such as 3-D printers, that can be found in the science laboratory, each classroom has a large interactive, touchscreen display that replaces

the traditional chalkboard, and students have access to digital tablets.

Within the lab, Witt said students will have the capability to experience basic 3-D printing, chromatography, and fingerprint analysis, among other subjects.

"When the kids are in here, they are making connections with the learning because it's literally in their hands," she said. "They are understanding why they need to know geometry and what a right angle is if they are to build something. Then they are able to achieve at a higher level."

Witt previously served as principal of the Bohlen Technical Center in Watertown, director of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) of the Jefferson-Lewis BOCES, and she also taught at Watertown High School.

"I think what we are going to find here, as I have previously found in CTE, is that the students become so excited and engrossed in the curriculum because they are learning at a higher level," Witt said. "They are not bored or disengaged, and it gives them confidence in their abilities."

The lesson plans and course structure are provided by DoD STARBASE, but the staff has the freedom to present the curriculum in whatever way they find most suitable for the students.

"We looked through all the presentations with a fine-tooth comb and practiced all the lessons so we could teach each other," Witt said. "Since July, the teachers have been doing all the different labs and activities. We're all teachers and we're all professionals, but we weren't STARBASE professionals before. But we are so fortunate to be part of an organization with such a high level of support."

Witt said that more than 10 North Country school districts have committed to participating in the STARBASE Academy, and that 68 classes have been scheduled.

The two classrooms can hold approximately 30 students each, but a third classroom will be available once the academy becomes established at Fort Drum. Witt said that the DoD program is structured so that when they meet certain criteria and goals at Level I, then they can expand to middle school curriculum



(Level II) and then high school (Level III). It's a process that takes a few years, she said, but that is the hope for the Fort Drum STARBASE Academy.

"Once you get a long-term facility established then you can take these students all the way through high school so they are incredibly prepared going forward," Witt said. "This is especially helpful for smaller schools that don't have the diversity in STEM education that larger schools have. Some schools struggle with getting enough science and math teachers, so this will be a nice supplement for them."

At the end of the week, each student leaves with a 60-page binder that summarizes everything covered in class, and a certificate of completion.

"But what we really want students to leave with is knowing that learning can be exciting, and that it can inspire them to continue to work hard and pursue whatever career field that they are interested in," Witt said.

It's been a little over a year since the DoD approved Fort Drum as the newest STARBASE

installation – the first in New York state. More than \$1 million went into establishing the former Visual Information facility on Lewis Avenue into a schoolhouse.

Witt said that she has never experienced building a school from scratch before, and there was a lot of support to make this happen.

"People were genuinely excited and they have been talking about this, both on post and off post," she said. "Every single person I have met here is as interested in helping us achieve our goals as they are their own. And the military community is so welcoming. They are an incredible extended family that I never knew about before."



Childcare

Child care has been a hot topic lately, both locally and across the United States. The combination of high cost to parents and low wages for child care workers has had a lot of people scratching their heads. The huge disruption in the workforce has only added to the confusion. For many observers, it's a puzzle to work on. For families it's a barrier to work, to sustainability, and to genuine options.

The North Country had been losing child care capacity for years, slowly but steadily. In March of 2013, there were 98 Home-Based child care programs in Jefferson and Lewis Counties. It dipped to 65 in January of 2021- a 34% drop. This had a negative effect on employers' hiring, participation in the workforce- especially for women, and overall growth during the pandemic recovery. The economic development agencies for Jefferson and Lewis counties took notice.

With a proposal from Jefferson Community College, Community Action Planning Council, and the Small Business Development Center, Naturally Lewis and Jefferson County Economic Development agreed to fund a pilot program and increase child care capacity by investing in Home-Based programs. These small facilities can be opened in a few months, are responsive to neighborhood child care needs, and are able to operate successfully in very small communities.

The pilot provided resources to meet child care standards (e.g., adding fire extinguishers, ensuring 1st Aid and CPR training, paying for required background checks). Participants in the program were also given expert instruction about starting a small business, and when they opened their business, a college level Child Development course (at no cost to the participant) helped build program quality and ensure best practice. Several new programs were added, and the program was funded and expanded for a second year with funds provided by both the Jefferson

and Lewis County Legislatures from their American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding allocations. The expanded program included funds for materials and services for the new Home-Based programs.



Another element of the expanded program was to support the nine Day Care Centers not funded by Head Start, in their effort to retain and recruit staff. Quarterly payments are made to employees who have been working at least 6 months, and significant salary dollars are designated for new staff. In this field, capacity must precede service, but it's difficult to invest in staff without matching revenue. The operating margins for Child Care Centers are so small- due to the labor-intensive nature of the work- that the County investment has created new opportunity for growth. There are 71 Home-Based programs in the two-County region today, with about ten others in the application process for Registration/Licensing. St. Lawrence County has since instituted funding for a similar approach.

The National Association of Counties asked for information about replicating the pilot and other New York State areas have indicated commitment to starting their own Home-Based Child Care support efforts. The real measure is for the children and families who have new options for high-quality care, a stable child care arrangement, and peace of mind on this critical family issue. Increasing the availability of child care in the region benefits our military and non-military families alike.



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Advocate Drum would like to thank our loyal members for their continued support. We are fortunate that over 95% of our membership finds value in our organization and renews annually.

Please call or email us anytime and we would be happy to share membership materials or discuss what Advocate Drum can do for you or your colleagues.

Congratulations!



Advocate Drum would like to congratulate Senator Patty Ritchie on her upcoming retirement. Senator Ritchie has been a strong advocate for Fort Drum and the community. We appreciate all she has done for our men and women in uniform, and for this organization.

*Enjoy retirement, your family,
and the well-deserved free time.*